



**GIFFORDS WRITTEN TESTIMONY - APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED FY23 ADJUSTMENTS FOR HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES**

**TO: APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**SUBMITTED BY: MIKE MCLIVELY, COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INITIATIVE POLICY DIRECTOR, GIFFORDS**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 23, 2022**

**SUBJECT MATTER: GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED FY 23 BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS Governor's, \*H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023**

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Giffords is a national gun violence prevention organization named after former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who was shot in the head in 2011 while hosting an event for her constituents in Tucson, Arizona. At Giffords we work with legislators and advocates around the country to promote common sense solutions to gun violence, and with our community violence work we recognize that the day-to-day shootings on our city streets that occur disproportionately in communities of color are one of the main drivers of America's gun violence epidemic.<sup>1</sup>

Across the nation over the past two years, we've seen a spike in homicides and shootings since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic,<sup>2</sup> including in Connecticut. Hartford suffered its highest number of homicides in nearly 20 years last year,<sup>3</sup> and New Haven the most since 2011.<sup>4</sup> So there is a clear and urgent need to respond to community violence with every available resource and not just law enforcement approaches, but also community and public-health based solutions, including hospital-based violence

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<sup>1</sup> Giffords, Community Violence, <https://giffords.org/issues/community-violence>.

<sup>2</sup> Researchers from the National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice found that across the country, "homicide rates increased 30% in 2020, a large and troubling increase that has no modern precedent." [https://craftmediabucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/Year\\_End\\_Crime\\_Update\\_Design.pdf](https://craftmediabucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/Year_End_Crime_Update_Design.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Top stories of 2021: Hartford has deadliest year since 2003, <https://www.courant.com/breaking-news/hc-br-hartford-2021-homicides--20211230-bgytvk7aangy3bx46p5fesjmu-story.html>.

<sup>4</sup> 2021 was the deadliest year in New Haven in 10 years with 25 homicides, <https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/2021-was-deadliest-year-in-New-Haven-in-10-years-16740544.p hp>.

intervention programs, which work directly with individuals who have been violently injured to save both lives and taxpayer dollars by disrupting cycles of violence in our communities.<sup>5</sup>

That's why we were so pleased when this Legislature acted last year to make Connecticut the first state in the nation, along with Illinois, to direct its medicaid program to reimburse services provided by certified Violence Prevention Professionals.<sup>6</sup> House Bill 5677 directed DSS to amend the state medicaid plan to include the provision of services from certified violence prevention professionals to Medicaid patients.<sup>7</sup> This was incredibly important as a way to leverage federal dollars to support services for individuals who are violently injured and at risk of reinjury or of committing violence themselves in the near future.

The passage of this bill last year was an important step forward in Connecticut and has also had national implications: several other states including Oregon,<sup>8</sup> Maryland,<sup>9</sup> and California,<sup>10</sup> have introduced similar legislation this year.

With that said, the next critical step is successful implementation of this new reimbursement structure for violence prevention professionals. The CTHVIP Collaborative, of which Giffords is a supporting member, has been engaged in ongoing conversations with DSS regarding the implementation process. **The Legislature and this Committee can support this effort this year by ensuring that the implementation process is fully funded in the budget for DSS.**

To summarize, we applaud you for taking steps to leverage Medicaid to support Violence Prevention Professionals and we urge you to robustly fund the rollout and implementation of this innovative policy. As we're seeing this year, other states are

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<sup>5</sup> The HAVI, Hospital-based Violence Intervention: Practices and Policies to End the Cycle of Violence, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d6f61730a2b610001135b79/t/5d83c0d9056f4d4cbdb9acd9/1568915699707/NNHVIP+White+Paper.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Connecticut on the Vanguard of Addressing Gun Violence with Medicaid Funding, <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/connecticut-on-the-vanguard-of-9602833>.

<sup>7</sup> Connecticut House Bill 5677, <https://legiscan.com/CT/bill/HB05677/2021>.

<sup>8</sup> Oregon House Bill 4045, <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2022R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB4045/Introduced>.

<sup>9</sup> Maryland Senate Bill 350, <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Legislation/Details/sb0350?ys=2022RS>.

<sup>10</sup> California Assembly Bill 1929, [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=20210220AB1929&search\\_keywords=medical](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=20210220AB1929&search_keywords=medical).



taking their cues from you and looking to see how Connecticut will handle implementation—which makes the success of this effort all the more critical. Thank you for your work on this issue, and please don't hesitate to reach out if we at Giffords can support in any way.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike McLively  
Community Violence Initiative Policy Director  
Gifford Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence